

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 25-45 are pending, with claim 1 being independent. The abstract has been amended. No new matter has been introduced.

Independent claim 1 recites a branching device for at least one electric line. The branching device includes a housing and at least one electrically conducting wire terminal that provides a branching contact and is accommodated in a holder and includes contact lips with cutting edges for cutting through insulation of a wire to be connected to the wire terminal. The wire terminal also includes at least one connecting lug, a through-channel for the uninterrupted passage of the wire, and at least one holding-down clamp which holds the wires in the through-channel of the wire terminal. At least one of the contact lips is located diagonally to the through-channel so that the tip of the edge of the contact lip protrudes into the through-channel. At least one of the contact lips is flexible in a direction pointing away from the through-channel. The holding-down clamp exhibits a transverse plate that closes off the through-channel and has an opening through which the connecting lug of the wire terminal protrudes.

Claims 1, 25-40 and 43-45 have been rejected as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,919,627 (Embo) in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,257,945 (Heng). Claims 41¹ and 42 have been rejected as obvious further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,071,145 (Toly). Applicant requests withdrawal of these rejections because any proper combination of Embo, Heng, and Toly would still fail to describe or suggest "at least one holding-down clamp which holds the wires in the through-channel of the wire terminals" and which "exhibits a transverse plate that closes off the through-channel and has an opening through which the connecting lug of the wire terminal protrudes," as recited by claim 1.

Embo is directed to a plug connector with a lower part and a cover including a number of insulation displacement contacts (IDCs).² The IDCs are used for inserting at least one conductor

¹ The Office Action states that "Claims 42 and 43 are rejected... further in view of Toly." In view of the totality of the rejection, Applicant believes that the Office Action is correctly read as applying the Toly reference to claims 41 and 42.

² See Embo, Fig. 1, numbers 1 and 3; Fig. 2, number 8.

of a cable,³ and are seen to be included in pairs with a slot and fork limbs.⁴ The slot and fork limbs are used to cut into the insulation and to make a contact with the IDC contacts.⁵

The Office Action states that elements 13 and 5 in Embo's Fig. 1 disclose a holding-down clamp which holds the wires in the through-channel of the wire terminals and which exhibits a transverse plate that closes off the through-channel and has an opening through which the connecting lug of the wire terminal protrudes.

In Embo, element 5 is simply a plug body that holds conductors and plug contacts, and is not seen to provide for a holding-down clamp with a transverse plate. Further, element 13 corresponds to guides for controlling where conductors come to rest.⁶ The guides do not clamp or use a transverse plate. Nor does Embo elsewhere disclose a holding-down clamp with a transverse plate that closes off the through-channel and has an opening through which the connecting lug of the wire terminal protrudes.

Also, though the Office Action relies on elements 13 and 5 in Fig. 1 of Embo as disclosing "at least one of the contact lips is flexible in a direction pointing away from the through-channel," no specific component is deemed to disclose a flexible contact lip. In order to understand the intended structure that the Office Action interprets as representing the claim limitation, applicant turns to an earlier claim limitation where the Office Action reads: "...is accommodated in a holder (16) and includes contact lips, with cutting edges..." In Embo, elements 15 and 16 work together with the IDC contacts for pressing the individual conductor 6 into slots 10. Specifically, Embo describes element 16 as a "reinforcing rib," and thus appears to explicitly disclose a component which is not flexible.⁷ Further, the reinforcing rib is not seen to be flexible in a direction pointing away from the through-channel.

As stated above, Embo further fails to disclose or suggest that at least one of the contact lips is located diagonally to the through-channel so that the tip of the edge of the contact lip protrudes into the through-channel. This point is acknowledged through the Office Action's

³ See Embo, Fig. 1, numbers 6 and 7.

⁴ See Embo, Fig. 3, numbers 8, 10, and 11.

⁵ See Embo, column 5, lines 25-30.

⁶ See Embo, column 5, lines 10-15 and 44-48.

⁷ See Embo, column 6, line 5.

reliance on Heng, and the Office Action's statement that "Embo discloses substantially the claimed invention except for the contact lips being located diagonally to the through-channel."
See office action page 3, paragraph 2.

Heng is directed to a connection terminal with a single slotted connection unit.⁸ The unit includes two slots or slits at opposite ends for retaining and stripping a wire.⁹ Corresponding to the slot or slit, a first flared opening with sharp sloping edges for a first wire section is used for stripping a wire.¹⁰ There are also two opposite support sides, each of which is essentially a plane and carries two respective other sides that slope obliquely away from each other, with the six sides defining a hollow convex hexagonal shape of the connection unit.¹¹ Neither the connection unit nor the connection terminal in its entirety, includes the recited holding-down clamp, nor does the Office Action contend that they do so.

Consequently, Heng does not disclose or suggest "at least one holding-down clamp which holds the wires in the through-channel of the wire terminals" which "exhibits a transverse plate that closes off the through-channel and has an opening through which the connecting lug of the wire terminal protrudes," as recited in claim 1.

Toly does not correct these deficiencies of Embo and Heng, nor does the Office Action contend that it does so. Accordingly, any possible combination of Embo, Heng, or Toly would still fail to describe or suggest "at least one holding-down clamp which holds the wires in the through-channel of the wire terminals" and which "exhibits a transverse plate that closes off the through-channel and has an opening through which the connecting lug of the wire terminal protrudes," and withdrawal of the rejections is hereby requested.

⁸ See Heng, Fig. 1, number 102.

⁹ See Heng, Fig. 1, numbers 5 and 6.

¹⁰ See Heng, Fig. 2-3, numbers 5A, 20 and 21.

¹¹ See Heng, Fig. 1, numbers 7, 8, and 9-12.

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All claims are in condition for allowance.

No fees are believed due at this time. Please apply any other charges or credits to deposit account 06-1050.

Respectfully submitted,

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